

## **“No Place for Trespassers”: The Supercats and the British Superheroine**

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If the superhero is a ‘uniquely American concept’, what does it mean, then, to be a British superheroine? The British superheroine is a trespasser in her own genre twice over. Firstly, if the superhero is a uniquely American genre, and depends on culturally specific story patterns such as the American Monomyth, then what space is there in said genre for the superheroes of other cultures?

Secondly, at a generic level, the superheroine is absent from key academic definitions of the genre; both Richard Reynolds and Peter Coogan assume a male identity in their definitions. In addition to this. Because she is a super-powered woman in action narratives, the superheroine has always been threatening to patriarchal assumptions of femininity. American superheroines have traditionally been excessively fetishized and sexualised, both to appeal to young men, the assumed consumers of superhero narratives, and to resolve their subversive nature. Mel Gibson has summed up the superheroine’s dilemma thus: ‘the female characters are either fantasy females for male consumption, or male, establishing the space of the comic as exclusively male.’ But how do British girls’ comics, publications which catered specifically for girls, resolve the British superheroine into an unthreatening figure?

Using the British girls’ comics team the Supercats, this paper will consider the story ‘No Place for Trespassers!’ (Spellbound, 1977), exploring the way the Supercats, due to their nature as active women, are constructed as trespassers in a male domain, echoing the conflicted nature of the British superheroine in academic spaces.

### **Kurzbiographie**

Olivia Hicks is a second year PhD student at the University of Dundee. Her PhD focuses on the super-girl in British and American girls’ comics. Her research interests include superhero comics, girls’ comics, gender theory, queer theory, genre theory and whiteness studies. She recently completed a placement at the British Library where she researched 21st century British small press comics anthologies.